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Author: John Byrne Cooke

On the Road with Janis Joplin

Excerpt

CHAPTER ONE

November 30, 1967

THE 707'S WHEELS touch down at San Francisco International Airport and with few regrets I leave behind the East, where my mother's family has lived since they arrived on the New England coast aboard a vessel that followed in the wake of the *Mayflower*. There they landed and there, for the most part, they stayed, close by the Atlantic shore. In five hours I've covered what it took the emigrants of the nineteenth century's great westward migration months of peril to travel. Like those earlier travelers, I'm casting off the old and hoping to find in California the magic pathway to the rest of my life.

Go west, young man.

In my case, it is Albert Grossman, not Horace Greeley, who points the way.

The southwest wind is roiling the shallow waters off the airport runway, turning them muddy emerald. It has been a cold fall in the East. By comparison, the California air feels springlike as I cross the tarmac to the terminal. The hills that surround the Bay are greened by the rains that return to the coast with autumn. Autumn in the East forces the flora into retreat and quiescence. To an easterner, green hills in November signal rebirth ahead of its time, a resurrection that fills me with hope. The breeze carries the scent of growing things. Mixed with the jet fumes, I can smell salt water, and something more exotic—patchouli oil, maybe, or pot.

Peter Albin greets me at the gate. We have talked on the phone in recent days, to discuss logistics ("My flight gets in at . . ." "I'll pick you up and we'll . . ."). I know Peter by sight because I saw him, back in June, at the Monterey International Pop Festival, standing his ground at stage right as a member of Big Brother and the Holding Company, the band that knocked the audience back on its collective heel. Peter's feet don't move much when he plays the electric bass. His body sways to the beat, sometimes curling over the instrument to wring from it insistent riffs that propel the songs forward, sometimes standing bolt upright, his back arched, shaking the bass so the notes fly from the stage with that much more force.

In the airport, face-to-face, Peter is friendly, open, welcoming. He moves with angular looseness and has a lopsided smile. At twenty-three, he's the youngest in the band. In Cambridge, Massachusetts, where I

have lived for the past nine years, Peter's shoulder-length hair would earn him derisive shouts of "Hahvahd fairy!" from the townies, their ducktails rigid with Brylcreem. In SFO, he attracts surreptitious glances from the servicemen emplaning for Vietnam and the businessmen in their suits. It would surprise them to know that Peter is a junior executive, dressed for rock and roll. He is the member of Big Brother who signs the contracts, the one who comes to pick up the guy dispatched from New York by Albert Grossman—creator of Peter, Paul and Mary, manager of Bob Dylan and a host of lesser folk luminaries—to oversee the band on the road. As the music of the counterculture has evolved from folk to folk-rock—the Mamas & the Papas, Simon & Garfunkel, Buffalo Springfield—to full-bore rock and roll, Albert has kept pace.

When Peter's car crests the rise where Highway 101 leaves South San Francisco behind and comes in view of the city proper, I see the white houses dancing up and down the hills and I feel at home. San Francisco is my favorite American city. I have been here often over the years, most recently in June, when I landed at SFO as part of D. A. Pennebaker's film crew, on my way to Monterey for the Pop Festival, fired then, as now, with the sense of moving toward the promise of things to come, ready to do my part to make the promise come true.

I have a family connection to the Bay Area, an uncle who is a professor of botany at UC Berkeley. When I drove across the country for the first time, in the summer after my sophomore year at Harvard, my uncle's Berkeley home was my destination. In recent years, it is music that has brought me often to the cities by the Bay. From the first time I stepped into the Club 47 coffeehouse in Cambridge and heard Joan Baez sing, music has defined my friendships and my life. I discovered bluegrass music and became a member of Cambridge's homegrown bluegrass and old-time band, the Charles River Valley Boys. In the spring of 1963 I drove across the country again, this time with two friends from Cambridge, and we discovered in Berkeley a folk community that was welcoming and familiar.

In the folk music revival, Berkeley and Cambridge were united by enthusiasm for the traditional roots of American music, black and white, and the innovations that creative players could derive from those themes. Some of my Cambridge friends made the journey to California regularly. A few moved here. The kinship forged on the Cambridge-Berkeley axis was based on sharing the music and shunning competition. We believed ourselves to be quietly superior to what we saw as the more commercially oriented pickers in New York and L.A. Our image of the prototypical New York guitar player was a guy who turned toward the wall when he played his hottest licks, so you couldn't see how he did it.

Since that first visit to the Berkeley folk scene in 1963, I have come back whenever I can, to play music and smoke dope and drink Jack Daniel's Tennessee whiskey and Rainier Ale—Berkeley's preferred boilermaker, known locally as JD and Green Death—and to experience the brilliant, preternaturally focused California days that inspire us to throw some bread and cheese and wine into a backpack and take acid and spend the day somewhere on the coast.

A couple of years ago I moved to California for what I thought would be forever, but it turned out I was chasing the Wrong Girl. This time, I'm here to stay. I have left behind the life of a performing musician in the interest of getting serious about the rest of my life. For now, I will help others devote themselves

more fully to their music while I handle the money and logistics. I have exchanged my guitar for an attaché case. It contains itineraries, contracts, and the promise of loud music, late nights, and loose women.

To Peter Albin, I reveal none of the giddy high that the waters of the Bay, the sight of Coit Tower, a glimpse of the Golden Gate Bridge, arouse in me. With Peter, I'm all business. I'm cool. He takes me to a motel on Columbus Avenue, in North Beach. A few years ago, the North Beach coffeehouses were the focus of San Francisco's folk scene, and before that, the home of the Beats. I wonder if any unamplified music survives in the city that has become the wellspring of American rock and roll, but satisfying this curiosity will have to wait. Right now, I've got to pass inspection by my prospective employers. Peter gives me half an hour to come down from thirty thousand feet, then picks me up again and takes me to meet the band.

They rehearse in a third-floor loft in a building they call the Warehouse, close by an off-ramp where the Central Freeway dumps traffic into the city streets. When Peter and I enter the loft, the four other members of the band are sitting at a round oak table by the windows. There's a bed covered with a madras spread, the ubiquitous, versatile fabric by which a generation of bohemian youth is enriching the textile magnates of India. There are amps and instruments and a drum set off to one side, random sticks of furniture, and enough floor space to hold a dance competition. A few oil paintings adorn the walls. They're by the drummer, David Getz, I will learn. David has set his painting aside for a venture into rock and roll.

The space could be any number of artists' lofts where I've been to late-night parties in New York, but, except for the paintings, the art in progress here isn't visible, and the quintet scrutinizing me now is pure San Francisco. This is the moment of truth. The truth is, I'm nervous, which is a condition I customarily conceal beneath a reserved exterior.

I recognize Janis, of course, but Peter is a polite fellow and he introduces her first. It was Janis who took the audience's breath away at Monterey, this Texas white girl who belts the rocking blues like no one else, propelled by one of the founding bands of the San Francisco Sound.

Sam Andrew and James Gurley are the lanky guitar players, sprawled in their chairs with legs askew. Tight-fitting black jeans. Pointy-toed boots. *Long* hair. Way longer than any East Coast beatnik's. Theirs is down past their shoulders, combed straight like Janis's. I'm six-feet-one-and-a-bit, and I judge that Sam and James, upright, will inhabit the same altitude. Peter is a couple of inches shorter. David is more compact. He falls into the range that eyewitnesses describe as average height. At this meeting he sits squarely on his chair, all his attention on me, just as he sits at his drums onstage, centered and balanced. David's hair, and Peter's, is a little shorter than Sam's and James's, pageboy haircuts gone to seed.

Janis is watchful. In repose her face is unremarkable, not what you'd call pretty. Only her eyes betray the vitality she releases in performance. They are clear and alert, and when the introductions are over it is Janis who speaks first.

"What sign are you?"

“Libra.”

“That sounds just,” James says. This is a generous reaction and I’m grateful to him, but Janis is looking me up and down with all the distrust appropriate for greeting a newcomer from the East, a road manager imposed on the band by Albert Grossman, the personal manager they barely know and for sure don’t fully trust.

Janis shrugs. “I don’t care much about Libras one way or the other.”

But I’m cool. I take no offense, because they accept me. Cautiously and with reservations, to be sure, but they accept me. I’m a rock-and-roll road manager. When I got off the plane it was only make-believe.

Now it’s real.

“I remember Janis took to you right away, man. She thought you were cute.”

Sam Andrew

CHAPTER TWO

THE POET-NOVELIST ROBERT Penn Warren wrote, “I eat a persimmon and the teeth of a tinker in Tibet are put on edge.” He liked to watch the far-reaching ripples of unpredictable cause and effect spread from that crystalline moment when the stone hits the still surface of the pond.

There are times and places where the flow of events becomes focused through an accidental lens—an experience, an event that becomes a turning point in many lives. Our generation is entranced by synchronicity, yet only those most attuned to the flow recognize these confluences for what they are at the time, even when they blunder into them head-on. The Monterey Pop Festival was such a moment for Janis and Big Brother. Their presence at the festival and the effect of their performance were the result of many decisions and turning points, any one of which might have yielded a different result.

For my part, if I hadn’t been at the Pop Festival, I wouldn’t have become the road manager for Big Brother and the Holding Company. That’s as close to fact as you can get in the realm of “what if?”

What if Big Brother hadn’t played at Monterey? They might not have signed a management contract with Albert Grossman later that year, maybe never. They might still have achieved the wider renown that launched Janis to even greater fame as the first woman superstar in rock music, for she was a powerful force, probably uncontainable at that point in the evolution of American popular music.

But the alternatives were roads not taken.

We were there, the band and I, borne by ripples set in motion at points far separated in geography and time, and the effect for each of us was life-changing. As a result, I moved from Cambridge to California as the focus of the counterculture shifted from east to west, and I continued to be a participant—in a new capacity—in the music that was piper piper to a decade of innovation and upheaval. For Janis and

Big Brother, the attention they gained at the Monterey Pop Festival launched them toward their destiny and summoned the forces that would eventually pull them apart.

At this remove in time, Monterey seems to me the jewel in the crown of the sixties. It was not the largest festival, but the brightest, the most finely formed, where all the benevolent potency that musicians and fans could generate together was made manifest, briefly, like a rainbow, or a ring around the sun, a vision impossible to fix in the physical world, but one whose glow endures in memory, freighted with emotion and meaning.

I'd like to claim that I understood the full significance of the Pop Festival while I was following D. A. Pennebaker around the Monterey County Fairgrounds with a Nagra tape recorder slung from my shoulder, but that would be an abuse of the storyteller's power. Much later, when I traced how the Pop Festival came about, how Big Brother came to be included and how Pennebaker came to film it, I marveled at the winding paths we followed, each strewn with many "What if?" moments, where a different decision, a different opportunity at any step of the way could have changed everything.

The seeds of the landmark gathering were sown by a quartet of would-be rock entrepreneurs from Los Angeles whose names sounded like a promising law firm: Wheeler, Taylor, Pariser and Shapiro. The idea was simple and visionary—corral as many of the reigning pop stars of the moment as could be persuaded to work for a small fraction of their regular fees to play at a three-day festival that would unfold at the county fairgrounds in Monterey sometime in the summer of 1967. Enlist nobody but headliners. Shoot for the stars. Dazzle the music world and reap the harvest.

Things didn't work out quite the way these visionaries planned. They needed one act to commit before the rest, as a bellwether, a stalking horse. Get the bandwagon rolling, they thought, and others will jump on board. They approached the Mamas and the Papas and Simon and Garfunkel, separately.

You want us to play for a small fraction of our regular fee? Who else have you got?

The would-be promoters named a bunch of names tinged with stardust, none of whom had yet pledged themselves to the festival. Forget it, said the Mamas and the Papas and Simon and Garfunkel, separately. The would-be promoters pleaded, and their enthusiasm kindled a spark of light in Papa John Phillips. The Taylor of the firm was Derek Taylor, formerly a tabloid journalist in his native England, more recently the publicist for and a good chum of the Beatles. Taylor was slight and fastidious, whereas Phillips was long and loose. They both had genuine smiles, honest charm, and a way with words. Phillips sensed in Taylor a kindred spirit. I'll tell you what, Phillips said. I'll talk to Paul (Simon) and Art (Garfunkel), and if they say yes we'll say yes.

Already a crucial change had taken place. Instead of the would-be promoters trying to sign up musicians, one of the musicians was talking to other musicians to consider how a new kind of music festival might come to be.

A meeting took place at Jeanette MacDonald's Bel Air mansion, which John and Michelle Phillips had recently purchased, thanks to John's way with words and harmonies and chord progressions. (A new day

had surely dawned when folk-rock stars could buy real estate only movie stars—and a few popular music stars of a very different style—could previously afford.) The main house, a mansion deserving of the name, encouraged everyone to believe that music could build castles in the air.

Attending the summit were John and Michelle and Paul and Art, the would-be promoters, and another quartet—Adler, Melcher, Turetsky and Somer—that in fact included two lawyers. This was, after all, L.A., the land of greed and profit. True, it had welcomed or given birth in recent years not only to the Mamas and the Papas but also to Buffalo Springfield and the Chambers Brothers and the Byrds and the Beach Boys. Hippie chicks with stars in their eyes and love in their hearts flocked to the Sunset Strip, where the promoters and the agents camouflaged themselves with bell-bottoms and hair newly permitted to grow past ears and collars, but the bottom line was still the bottom line.

There was magic in the air at Jeanette MacDonald's castle, and magic carried the day. The musicians decided they absolutely definitely positively would *not* play for a fraction of their usual fees, but they would play for *free*, and from that moment the musicians ran the festival.

Within a few days, the Beach Boys, the Byrds, the Who, the Association, Dionne Warwick, and Buffalo Springfield had added their names to the list of performers, with the Mamas and the Papas and Simon and Garfunkel at the top. Within a week, the festival was christened the Monterey International Pop Festival and it boasted among its board of governors Paul McCartney of the Beatles, Jim McGuinn of the Byrds, Mick Jagger and Andrew Loog Oldham of the Rolling Stones, Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys, John Phillips, Lou Adler—formerly the record producer for Jan and Dean, now producing the Mamas and the Papas—Smokey Robinson, Paul Simon, and Johnny Rivers. An eclectic assortment of talents, heavily inclined toward the L.A. cosmology. The festival would be set up as a nonprofit, with the proceeds to go to causes that benefited popular music, applications to be reviewed by the board.

The momentum began to build, the bandwagon fired up a head of steam, and more talent, from far and near, lined up to climb aboard. The Paul Butterfield Blues Band. Eric Burdon and the Animals. Booker T. and the MGs, Canned Heat, Hugh Masakela, the Electric Flag, Laura Nyro, the Blues Project, the Paupers, Jimi Hendrix. Otis Redding! *Ravi Shankar!* Enough stars, well known and lesser known, to establish a new galaxy and open it up for business.

Okay, what's missing?

The festival directors knew that a bunch of bands with funny names had sprung up in San Francisco in the past couple of years. They knew because Jefferson Airplane already had a hit—"White Rabbit"—whose references to drugs had put a generation of wary parents even more on their guard, and because one of the best-respected music critics of the day was championing the Northern California rockers.

The *San Francisco Chronicle's* Ralph J. Gleason would not have been out of place in a thirties spy movie by the brothers Warner. He was a between-the-wars character, trench-coated, armed with a sardonic manner, his cigarettes screwed into a short black holder. He looked with amusement on the excesses of the young, and at the same time reveled in the present moment. Gleason had written a jazz column since the day after the Creation. When he blessed a jazz album with liner notes, he bestowed the

imprimatur of a recognized authority. He had alarmed his hepcat readers in the early sixties by writing the occasional column about folk music. Joan Baez caught his eye and ear. So did Bob Dylan. Gleason was that rarity among critics, a music lover who dared to applaud new music that he deemed worthy, even if the newcomers were displacing the cherished sounds of his own generation.

Gleason led the way, among the established critics, in recognizing and extolling the unique sound of the San Francisco rock bands. The scene in San Francisco had been percolating for a couple of years, mostly keeping to itself. Bright-eyed kids flocked to the Avalon and the Fillmore, Depression-era ballrooms now levitating to a new beat, where fans gyrated around the dance floors and the bands played the dancers like an instrument. When the energy of the dancers encouraged the songs to run long, the symbiosis offered flashes of enlightenment. There were light shows and acid tests, and the sexual revolution was enlisting eager recruits by the thousand.

The civic authorities, alarmed, resuscitated an archaic bit of municipal code that prohibited dancing at concerts of live music. Gleason lobbied in his column to overturn the code. At his urging, the *Chronicle* editorialized in support of Bill Graham, when the former waiter, actor, and San Francisco Mime Troupe manager applied for a permit to operate the Fillmore Auditorium as a rock-and-roll dance hall. (At the Avalon, a counterculture collective called the Family Dog orchestrated the entertainment.)

When whisperings of the Monterey Pop Festival reached Gleason's ears, he expressed curiosity, then interest. In a twinkling he was invited to join the festival board. Say, fellows, he offered—after hearing what the Los Angelenos had in mind—you really ought to get some of the San Francisco bands. They already planned to invite the Airplane. Gleason suggested more names. Still smiling all around, the members of the board heeded his counsel. But getting the bands with the weird names and the far-out sounds to sign on for the festival was another matter.

The San Francisco bands were like families, and the Haight-Ashbury district of the city, where most of the bands lived, near Golden Gate Park, was their neighborhood. They were clannish, socially radical, wary of the mainstream music business in general and of L.A. in particular. A pilgrimage by John and Michelle Phillips and Lou Adler to the Haight did little to allay the musicians' misgivings. Adler was a smooth type they had seen before and distrusted on sight. (The fact that he was more than he seemed and would be a guiding force that helped the Pop Festival to fulfill its potential would become apparent only later.) When Paul Simon, soft-spoken and sincere, visited the Haight, that was something else. Derek Taylor won some converts too, just as he had helped to win John Phillips to the idea in the first place.

It was clear to the San Francisco groups that while Adler and company didn't know much about the individual bands, they were aware of the San Francisco scene and they wanted to tap into its energy. Which convinced some of the musicians that the festival would exploit the bands and rip them off. Still, they sensed a not-to-be-missed event in the making. They were as eager as everyone else to hear the Who and Otis Redding and Ravi Shankar. Hey, listen, it might be far out.

The tipping point for the San Francisco bands was that musicians were running the show, and everyone was playing for free.

“Big Brother and the Holding Company and Janis were on the Pop Festival because I persuaded John Phillips and Lou Adler that they would be a knockout act. They had never heard of them. They wanted three bands from San Francisco, other than the Airplane, which they *had* heard of because the Airplane had recorded for Victor, and had a regional hit going on at that time. And I recommended Big Brother, and the Dead, and Quicksilver.”

Ralph J. Gleason

Five days before the festival began, Ralph Gleason reported in the *Chronicle* that the San Francisco Sound would be represented at Monterey not only by Jefferson Airplane, but also by the Grateful Dead, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Moby Grape, Country Joe and the Fish, and the Steve Miller Blues Band. And Big Brother and the Holding Company.

With the roster complete, the festival looked like a surefire winner. And just in case the founders’ wide-eyed visions came true, the proceedings, from start to finish, would be recorded on film for posterity.

D. A. Pennebaker’s role as the Pop Festival’s sight-and-sound archivist was even more of a fluke than the bloodless palace coup that put the musicians in charge. And, as it turned out, his presence was the key that unlocked the magic kingdom for Janis Joplin.

The waves of cause and effect that brought Pennebaker to Monterey in June 1967 had begun to spread years before, in the early sixties, when Penny and his partner, Ricky Leacock, made a film in Hungary about the cellist Pablo Casals. Flash-forward to 1965: Bob Dylan and his friend Bob Neuwirth were flipping the channel knob on a hotel TV and chanced to see the Casals film on what was then National Educational Television, not yet PBS. At the same time, a girl named Sara was working in the New York offices of Leacock Pennebaker, Inc. Sara had been impressed by “Daybreak Express,” Pennebaker’s first film, a five-minute marvel that employed Duke Ellington’s eponymous tune as the camera recorded the sunrise journey of a New York subway train from an outer borough to Manhattan. Sara knew Dylan. (She would in time become Sara Dylan.) She thought Bob would like the film. She arranged for him to see it.

When Pennebaker heard that Dylan’s manager, Albert Grossman, was interested in making a documentary film about Dylan, Penny presented himself for consideration. Thanks to Sara and “Daybreak Express” and the Casals film, Grossman and Dylan agreed to let Pennebaker film Dylan’s upcoming tour of England. Pennebaker asked Bob Altschuler, head of public relations at Columbia Records, Dylan’s label, for \$5,000 to cover transportation, in exchange for which he offered to give Columbia a 50 percent interest in the movie. Altschuler said thanks but no thanks, demonstrating that 20/20 foresight is often in limited supply. Penny raised the money elsewhere, but he never let Altschuler forget the missed opportunity.

Pennebaker’s style of filmmaking is to launch himself into real life, point his camera, and keep shooting. Early on, he found that in a surprisingly short time his subjects stop playing to the camera, more or less, and resume their normal behavior, whatever that might be. There are no staged scenes, no scripted dialogue, no retakes. The films are documentaries, if you understand that they involve going out to document, as best as you can, what’s happening, rather than cobbling together a movie from stock

footage and staged events and filmed interviews. The French call it *cinéma vérité*. In America, this approach is known as “direct cinema” or “living cinema” or “truth cinema.” Penny just goes out and does it. What he gets, he gets. What he misses—because he’s eating or sleeping or just because he’s tired, for the moment, of lugging the camera around on his shoulder—he misses. Do the subjects ever forget completely that the cameraman and soundman are there? Probably not. Is there truth in what the camera sees, even if the subjects are aware of the camera? You bet your life.

In the spring of 1965, Pennebaker accompanied Bob Dylan on a concert tour of England. He filmed Dylan being funny and cruel, brilliant and petty. He caught the power of one young man alone on a stage, playing his guitar and singing his extraordinary songs to rapt audiences. If Dylan was at any point putting on an act for the camera, he was playing himself as he wanted to be, as he imagined himself to be, which is another way of saying as he really was.

In the spring of 1967, the film, titled *Dont Look Back* (the lack of an apostrophe was intentional), opened in a smattering of art houses. The distribution was about one step higher than what was called a “road show” in the silent era, when a film’s producer would book the theaters himself and carry the reels from town to town in a Model T Ford. Limited initial distribution notwithstanding, the film did well and attracted favorable critical notice. Out of the blue, Penny got a call from Bob Rafelson, a TV writer-producer and would-be film director, who, with his partner, Bert Schneider, had created the pop group the Monkees. Rafelson had seen *Dont Look Back*. He wondered if Penny might be interested in filming a pop music festival. Penny was interested. Where’s the festival gonna be? In Monterey, California.

At the mention of California, Penny’s interest ratcheted up a notch. He had recently seen *The Endless Summer*, a documentary in which director Bruce Brown followed two surfers around the world as they sought the perfect wave. Most people thought of it as a surfing movie, but Penny didn’t see it that way at all. His filmmaker’s eye perceived the lyrical images as a paean to California—California as a state of mind, California as a new American Dream for the sixties.

Penny knew there had been a film about the Newport, Rhode Island, Jazz Festival, but he hadn’t seen it. He was certain no one had made a movie about a pop festival.

Penny flew to Los Angeles, where Rafelson took him to meet John Phillips and Lou Adler. Penny found something about John Phillips intriguing, and Phillips and Adler were intrigued by *Dont Look Back*. They proposed hiring Penny to direct the filming of the Pop Festival, but it was obvious to Penny that neither Phillips nor Adler had the first clue about how to produce a movie. “You need a producer,” Penny told them. They were astute enough to agree, and it became Penny’s movie.

Back at the offices of Leacock Pennebaker on West 45th Street, Penny began to organize the California expeditionary force. He was going to need a lot of film. He was going to need a lot of cameras. He was going to need a lot of *money*.

Phillips and Adler made a deal with ABC-TV to show the movie. Film arrived at Leacock Pennebaker by the case. Penny spent days and nights in the workshop to see how many cameras he could get up and running in time. The cameras were his design, a modification of a 16-millimeter Auricon, with the two-

hundred-foot magazine canted at an angle to the rear so the camera balanced better on the shoulder, and a hand grip added at the front of the housing for stability. They were powered by rechargeable nickel-cadmium battery packs that strapped around the cameraman's waist. Suited up with this outfit for a couple of hours, the effect was like wearing a Colt .45 Peacemaker—when you took it off, you felt naked.

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IN THE SPRING of 1967, the siren call of “There’s something happening here” is beckoning me. To where, I don’t know, but a Harvard degree in Romance languages and literature doesn’t provide the road map. Nor, for the first time since I graduated from college, does bluegrass music. I have been playing with the Charles River Valley Boys for almost six years, but the invasion of British rockers that began in 1964 has changed everything, bringing electric music to the forefront. By ’67, even for a well-established bluegrass band, folk music gigs are fewer and farther between.

It’s my hangout partner and sometimes Cambridge lodger, Bob Neuwirth, who opens the doorway to *what’s next* and invites me in. During Dylan’s *Dont Look Back* tour of England, Bobby was along for the ride as Dylan’s road manager. The next year, following Dylan’s electrified set at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, Neuwirth worked with Pennebaker on a follow-up film of Dylan touring England again, this time with an amplified backup band that within a few years would become known simply as “The Band.” The second film is unreleased, but Bobby has kept in touch with Pennebaker. When the Leacock Pennebaker offices begin to hum with preparations for Monterey, Bobby’s hip-happening potentiometer goes off the scale. He introduces me to Penny, and Penny hires me onto the crew.

A few days before the Pop Festival, Bobby and I fly to San Francisco. Pennebaker has gone a day ahead of us with the advance guard, to scout the scene and find a cheap motel for the film platoon soon to follow. Bobby and I rent a car at the airport and bushwhack across the peninsula to Highway One, the coast road. As a recent California resident, I’m the designated pilot, and I’m too impatient for the sight of the Pacific Ocean to cruise down 101. We spin the dial of the radio, searching for Procol Harum’s “Whiter Shade of Pale,” or some AM deejay playing any cut from the Beatles’ latest release, *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*. The underground FM stations are playing the whole album in big chunks of uninterrupted awe, but rental cars don’t have FM.

In Monterey, Pennebaker is already shooting film. “Here,” he says. He hands me a Nagra tape recorder. I like machines and this one is simple. Watch the VU meter. Don’t let it pin in the red or we’ll get distortion. Try to keep the mike out of the shots. Penny doesn’t tell me the Nagra costs thousands of dollars.

Pennebaker and Ricky Leacock’s breakthrough technical contribution to documentary filmmaking is the light weight and portability of their cameras and tape recorders, so the cameraman doesn’t have to be anchored by a tripod, and the sync-pulse generators built into the Nagra tape recorders, which eliminates the need for a wire connecting the camera to the recorder. At the beginning or end of a shot, the cameraman focuses the camera on the soundman. The soundman pushes a button on the Nagra. A light attached to the Nagra’s shoulder strap flashes, and at the same time a beep goes on the tape. *Et*

voilà! In the editing room, you sync the flash of light on the film to the beep on the tape and away you go. In the field, the cameraman and soundman are free to move independently, recording the scene from any angle, and to position the mike close to the sound source, untethered by wires.

Penny and I ramble the grounds. We film Tom Law putting up his tepee and smiling hippies erecting flimsy stalls for what will become a sideshow of psychedelia, a midway of far-out fashions and posters and sculpted aromatic candles and hippie gewgaws. We film in the festival office, where John and Michelle Phillips and Lou Adler and a host of assistants perform an intricate ballet from phone to phone. Dionne Warwick can't make it. The Beach Boys? Yes, no, maybe, and in the end, no. Too bad.

The oval fairgrounds arena has roofed tiers of seats flanking the long sides, and the stage fills most of one end. The other end is closed off with a simple board fence to control admissions. The lawn within the arena, built to accommodate horse shows, is covered with orderly rows of folding chairs. For the Pop Festival, seating within the arena is seven thousand plus.

Our film crew badges give us unfettered access to the arena, backstage, everywhere. We film the construction of the stage. When the sound system is hooked up, David Crosby, of the Byrds, tests it by humming into a mike. He smiles. "Oh, groovy. A nice sound system at last."

Elsewhere, the vibes are less jubilant. Monterey police chief Frank Marinello estimates the potential attendance at fifty thousand, and he worries that the Hells Angels may arrive in force. In his mental screening room he is running *The Wild One*, with leather boys Brando and Lee Marvin running amok among the daughters and granddaughters of the Monterey Peninsula's flag-waving Republicans and military families. Nearby Fort Ord is a major training ground for Vietnam-bound troops.

The civic leaders wonder where they are going to get the foodstuffs to feed fifty thousand beatniks and hippies, where all these undesirables will sleep, and, ohmyGod, will they have to defecate while they're here?

The night before the concerts get under way, Pennebaker wangles a dinner invitation from John and Michelle Phillips for himself and his trusty soundman. We arrive with camera and Nagra in hand. Penny is following his instincts, maybe hoping for some behind-the-scenes footage that will illuminate what is about to happen. John and Michelle have rented a house in Monterey to serve as an off-premises retreat during the festival. Outside the windows there are redwoods on a wooded slope that could be in Marin County or the Berkeley Hills. Michelle cooks steaks, makes a salad, sticks some French bread in the oven. The four of us eat, drink wine, and have a lovely time. Penny doesn't shoot a foot of film and I learn one of the ancillary benefits of *cinéma vérité*: Sometimes you just live life with your subjects instead of filming them.

In the course of the evening, there is no hint of the turmoil that Michelle has recently caused within the Mamas and the Papas. Just sixteen when she met John, she is nineteen now. Not yet really mature enough to be a wife or a Mama, she has been testing her wings. Brief affairs with Papa Denny Doherty and the Byrds' Gene Clark threatened her marriage to John and motivated John, Denny, and Mama Cass Elliott (who is carrying a torch for Denny herself) to eject Michelle from the group. They recently

performed a four-city tour with Michelle's parts sung by Lou Adler's girlfriend, Jill Gibson, but the fans were loyal to Michelle and the tour went badly. On their return to L.A., John and Denny and Cass took Michelle back. She and John reconciled. Denny, still nursing his wounds, has not yet arrived in Monterey. The group may have to perform without him.

This evening John and Michelle drink their wine and entertain us in a subdued style. It is the calm before whatever the confluence of energies gathered in Monterey is about to release.

On Friday morning, the air throughout the Monterey County Fairgrounds quivers almost audibly with high expectations. The coastal clouds retreat at midday and the sunshine is warm. Everybody's smiling. Ready or not, here we come.

"It's a Mexican standoff, typical of the yawning gulf between L.A. and San Francisco. . . . Paul Simon is the spiritual leader of the festival and most of us get involved because of him. He rises above all the scaly maneuvering and makes us see it from the audience's point of view. . . . The combination of Paul Simon's vision and Derek Taylor's acidic poise convinces us in the end. We do it for the fans and fuck the rest of it. . . . When you walk through the fairgrounds at twilight with the teepees painted with Sioux symbols, people playing guitars, and children and dogs running around the tents, it's worth all the hassles in the world. We've infiltrated the enemy camp and turned it into our own event. . . . We have our peyote-ceremony tents set up just as you walk in the gate."

Rock Scully, Grateful Dead management

CHAPTER THREE

THE THEME OF the festival is "Music, Love and Flowers." The music is a sure thing. For three days an extraordinary succession of acts will step onto the stage and play for the joy of it. The flowers arrive from Hawaii—eighty thousand orchids, a literal planeload, pink orchids everywhere. The love is speculative. It is a hope. A prayer. You can't ship it in or order it up. Can't buy me love.

The evening performances are sold out before the first ticket holder enters the fairgrounds.

People arrive by the carful, the VW busful, the hand-painted school busful. They come hitchhiking and they come by motorcycle. They come from up and down the coast, from San Francisco and L.A., and from farther afield. One girl has hitchhiked from Champaign, Illinois. Wiping the morning dew off the folding metal chairs in the fairgrounds arena gets her into the show. "How'd you get this job?" Pennebaker asks her, filming all the while. "Do you know somebody?" "No," she says, "I just happened to be lucky, I guess."

The fans have dressed for the occasion pretty much as they dress every day in the Summer of Love. Colors run wild. The range of fashions is broad enough to confound anyone hoping to spot a trend and sell clothes to this crowd next year or next month. Antique clothes and work clothes and formal clothes. Tie-dyes and batiks. Curtains and bedspreads and odd-lot material made into free-flowing shirts and dresses. Hats are much in style. Derby hats and top hats and cowboy hats, berets and Arab fezzes and American Indian headbands and fur hats the Russians wear in winter. Boots too—tall boots and short

boots and cowboy boots and hippie boots that zip up the side or the back, and lots of boots with really pointy toes like the English rockers wear. Winkle pickers, the Brits call them. What's a wrinkle? Something you eat. A very small marine snail. You eat it with your boots?

For the concerts, the Pennebaker film crew will occupy prime vantage points. The festival carpenters have built catwalks at each side of the stage about three feet below its level. The stage has a rectangular thrust that extends out about fifteen feet downstage center. Our catwalks wrap around the front corners of the thrust platform, allowing the cameramen to shoot from several angles.

Thirty feet in front of the stage, in the front rows of seats, Pennebaker places one camera on a tripod. Two more are mounted in the near ends of the permanent, roofed seats on either side of the arena. The others will be shoulder-held, shooting from the catwalks or other vantage points. Pennebaker himself has no fixed position. He will roam, free to shoot from the wings or behind the amps onstage or wherever else the spirit takes him.

The list of cameramen who have come along to film this pop music extravaganza contains some distinguished names. Albert Maysles is on a busman's holiday from *cinéma vérité* filmmaking with his brother David. The Maysleses made *What's Happening! The Beatles in the U.S.A.* a few years ago. Nick Proferes and Jim Desmond are Leacock Pennebaker protégés who have formed their own film company. Ricky Leacock, Penny's partner, is in the front rank of those who pioneered the *vérité* documentary style. He worked with the legendary filmmaker Robert Flaherty on *Louisiana Story*. Before that, Ricky was a combat cameraman in World War II, experience he hopes will not be relevant to surviving the Monterey Pop Festival.

Neuwirth has no camera, no Nagra, no apparent function within the crew—until the music starts. In real life he is an artist, a painter who also plays the guitar and writes songs. His true calling seems to be keeping in tune with the times and being on hand wherever the most memorable events are taking place. At Monterey, Bobby is Pennebaker's aesthetic consultant, the arbiter of hip, the guide for what to shoot and what to ignore. We can't film everybody. We don't have enough film. We have to shoot all the acts in which Lou Adler and John Phillips—the film's co-producers—have a special interest. Beyond that, the choice is ours. Somebody has to make the decisions. Penny has instincts of his own, and when a musical act grabs him, he shoots it. Otherwise he leaves it up to Bob. Bob sometimes consults with me. We rig a red light on a short pole at stage right, on the handrail of our catwalk there, where it can be seen from all the fixed camera positions. When Bobby turns on the light, the cameramen will go into action.

Camping spaces on the fairgrounds and in local campgrounds are full before the Friday evening concert, and the San Francisco bands see a chance to put into practice their music-for-the-people philosophy. In San Francisco they play free concerts and benefits with a frequency that would alarm any profit-minded manager. The Grateful Dead family, spearheaded by co-manager Rock Scully, gets Monterey Peninsula College to open its football field as a temporary campground. More festival pilgrims sack out in the floral pavilion on the fairgrounds, by arrangement with the sponsoring florists. Over the course of the

weekend, the Dead and Jefferson Airplane and several other performers play in the pavilion and at the football field for free, to the surprise and delight of the campers.

Everywhere, people are smiling, and we're thinking, Look how *many* of us there are! As the music begins, a gossamer enchantment seems to settle over the fairgrounds.

"So much of Monterey had *nothing* to do with logistics or planning. The bird just landed there. No rules, no instructions. It also said a lot to me about Northern California. So much of it could *never* have happened anywhere else. . . . It's always an amazing experience for me when I go to something that is *not* my production. I am like the maître d' from the Catskills. . . . Why is it taking so long to move the equipment? You call *this* a hot dog? . . . But Monterey passed the test. In the sense that the majority of the people came there to enjoy themselves, and they did. What prevailed over everything was the meeting of unnamed tribes who didn't even know they were tribes. . . . The looseness of Monterey, I always attributed to Lou Adler. After a while, there was *no* control. But they didn't *need* control because of the audience. They were all already members of the same organization. *Before* they got to the grand meeting of Monterey."

Bill Graham, rock promoter, Fillmore Auditorium

My perspective is more San Francisco than L.A. On Friday night, the acts that don't arouse my interest—the Association, Johnny Rivers, Beverley—are the acts, not by coincidence, that Neuwirth and Pennebaker deem not worth filming. The Paupers, a group recently acquired by Albert Grossman, are spirited but unknown. Eric Burdon and the Animals raise the energy a couple of jumps. In performance, their hit version of the folk classic "The House of the Rising Sun" is impressive and moving.

The light show for the evening performances is by Head Lights, from the Fillmore in San Francisco, projected on huge screens behind the performers: bubbles of color pulsating, undulating, overlaid with photos and film clips, a visual supplement to the music that few but the San Francisco ballroom fans have seen before.

By Saturday morning, Chief Marinello is smiling. The feared invasion by the Hells Angels has not materialized and the vibe on the fairgrounds is peaceful, elevated, charged with anticipation of the music yet to come.

In memory, the festival plays like a movie put together by a cheerfully stoned editor. It's a montage of vignettes, each one contributing something singular to the accumulating impression: Simon and Garfunkel singing better than ever . . . Otis Redding, taking obvious pleasure in singing for what he calls "the love crowd," putting his soul into "I've Been Loving You Too Long" . . . Hugh Masakela all but unknown in this gathering, the music jazz, and pretty good jazz at that, the vocals African tribal, the fusion of the two unfamiliar, but we dig it all the same, because it is here and now and part of this scene that is blowing our minds, and because in this context no one can do wrong.

During the concerts, I have no responsibilities. Pennebaker is recording the concert sound from the stage mikes, mixed through the main board. When the act onstage doesn't hold my attention, I stroll the

tent-alley bazaar outside the arena, where the incenses and oils give off Middle Eastern aromas. The kaleidoscopic array of tie-dye and batik and beads and face painters is dazzling.

The infectious spirit of the festival draws from one act after another performances that exceed their own expectations, and ours. In the midst of so many successes, the San Francisco bands succeed both individually and as a group. New to most of the crowd, they more than hold their own in this company, validating the recently christened San Francisco Sound. Country Joe MacDonald, on Saturday afternoon, with flower blossoms painted on his cheeks and an antique fireman's hard hat perched on his head, plays an extended rendition of "Section 43," a mesmerizing instrumental. The Fish are in the zone and they bring us with them. Close your eyes and it gets you high without chemical aids.

Jefferson Airplane work their vocal sorcery—Grace Slick, Marty Balin and Paul Kantner singing alternating leads on "High Flying Bird," Grace and Marty magical in duet on "Today," the band's tonalities and inflections utterly distinctive. After this, we can identify an Airplane song from thirty thousand feet.

The Grateful Dead are down to earth, boogeying, raising some dancers from their seats to vibrate in the aisles, on the grass at the back of the arena, and as far beyond its gates as the sounds carry, but the Dead never fully get up to speed. They're just back from New York and they played in L.A. the night before. Jerry Garcia's guitar has been stolen, he's bummed, the band is tired. But the Dead are the Dead, sui generis, and they add new recruits to the core of San Francisco devotees who are already called Deadheads.

The performance many of us will remember forever comes from Big Brother and the Holding Company. They take the stage on Saturday afternoon, four long-haired guys and Janis Joplin. Their outfits aren't as flamboyant or coordinated as the styles of the L.A. acts. Sam and James are in black jeans and boots and loose-fitting shirts. Peter and David venture more color. Janis wears hippie street clothes, jeans and a top. In San Francisco she's already something of a local legend. She has been singing with Big Brother for just a year, and she has won a reputation as a singer like no other. Beyond the Bay, she is all but unknown.

The short set culminates with Janis's showstopper from the San Francisco ballrooms, Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton's "Ball and Chain," which Big Brother has recast in a minor key, the better to evoke the emotion in the lyrics. Their arrangement begins with four ascending notes wrenched from James Gurley's guitar, a momentary Handelian silence, and an intro that shatters all the rules. James plays riffs from an alternative reality, and chords that no one at the Gibson guitar factory ever dreamed. His overture is a wail from another point of view, an assault on the festival's self-satisfied bliss, and it transfixes the audience. Up to now, Big Brother is just another variation on the San Francisco Sound. From this moment, they're Something Else.

James's introduction shrieks to a crescendo and spins off into the ether, leaving only the drums and Peter Albin's bass, slow and low, thumping like a tired heart in labor, as Janis barely whispers the opening lines:

Sittin' down by my window,

Just lookin' out at the rain . . .

She doesn't stay in the soft register for long. Her voice rises, pleads, screams. By the time she hits the first chorus, the audience is mesmerized. Can a white girl sing the blues? Janis's answer is yes, in spades. She matches the intensity of James's guitar while she explores the same outer realms, and . . . she can't . . . but she does. . . . When she really pulls out all the stops she sings *chords!*

In the second row of the audience, in the fenced-off section reserved for performers and VIPs, Mama Cass Elliott gapes openmouthed. When the audience's roar of approval erupts at the end of the song, Cass turns to the guy beside her and exclaims, "Wow. Wow! That's really heavy!"

Backstage, Big Brother is jubilant—but there is trouble brewing, right here in Music City. Big Brother, along with some of the other San Francisco bands, refused permission to be filmed, and Pennebaker is beside himself. Big Brother *has* to be in the movie! Janis's performance will *make* the movie!

The Grateful Dead have also declined to be filmed. So have Moby Grape, but the Bay Area ranks are disunited. Country Joe and the Fish gave permission. So did the Airplane. Julius Karpen, Big Brother's manager, is adamantly against their appearing in the movie. Karpen is a balding, myopic, beatnik businessman who drives a hearse. He is called Green Julius within the San Francisco rock scene because he smokes prodigious amounts of weed. By the account of one insider, Julius refuses to discuss business with anyone who won't first smoke grass with him. He is given to waxing philosophical, and at length, about the state of the world and the unique role of the San Francisco scene in the larger swirl of the cosmos. Like many another eccentric, Julius has found a home in the San Francisco counterculture. He is deeply suspicious of the music business. The movie is a rip-off, he says. Everybody's playing for free, so why should Phillips and Adler and ABC-TV and whoever else profit from the performances, while the bands get nothing? Oh, right, proceeds to causes that benefit popular music, whatever that means.

Janis is sympathetic to the anticommercial ethic that pervades the San Francisco music scene. She is devoted to the communal spirit that the bands share, but nothing is more important to her than Big Brother's career. Maybe the fact that the Airplane—the only other San Francisco band that features a chick singer—has agreed to be filmed has something to do with Janis's determination that Big Brother should be in the movie too. She leads the fight against Julius, and a couple of the boys back her. At an impasse among themselves and at odds with their manager, the band casts about for an oracle to show them the auspicious pathway. They turn to Albert Grossman.

Grossman is at Monterey to shepherd two of his acts. The Paupers are Canadian, new talent from north of the border. The Electric Flag is a band recently formed by Mike Bloomfield, the blues guitar virtuoso, formerly of the Paul Butterfield Blues Band. Monterey is the Flag's debut performance. Butterfield, of course, is here too, with Elvin Bishop now discharging by himself the lead guitar duties that he has shared with Bloomfield until recently. Grossman knows both Butterfield and Bloomfield from Chicago, where they all got their start in the music business. He was responsible for Butterfield's acceptance in the folk clubs of the early sixties. The Butterfield band is one that other musicians go out of their way to

hear. Grossman also manages Peter, Paul and Mary. Hell, he *invented* Peter, Paul and Mary. He noticed that all the folk-pop groups were guys—the Kingston Trio, the Brothers Four, the Limelighters, the Chad Mitchell Trio—and it occurred to him that a group with a girl might catch the public’s imagination. Grossman tried to interest his friends Bob Gibson and Bob (soon to be Hamilton) Camp, who performed as a duo and sang exceptional harmonies together, in taking on a girl singer to take the harmonies to the next level. Gibson and Camp didn’t share his vision, but Peter Yarrow and Noel (soon to be Paul) Stookey, were more open to suggestion, and, together with Mary Travers, they are reaping the rewards.

At the time of the Pop Festival, Grossman’s roster of clients also includes the James Cotton Blues Band, Richie Havens, Gordon Lightfoot, Odetta, Ian and Sylvia, and the Band.

The breadth of Grossman’s achievements is less important to Janis and Big Brother than the singular fact that he is Bob Dylan’s manager and that Dylan has thrived under his care. He encouraged Peter, Paul and Mary to record Dylan’s “Blowin’ in the Wind,” and by so doing accelerated the trio’s rise to fame and used their momentum to bring more notice to Dylan, whose name was then becoming known but whom relatively few in the folk music audience had seen or heard. It was not an accident of timing that Peter, Paul and Mary’s “Blowin’ in the Wind” was rising on the charts in the weeks before the 1963 Newport Folk Festival, where Dylan scored his breakthrough triumph—with a significant boost from Joan Baez, who sang with him in his set and brought him onstage during her Sunday night closer.

Backstage at Monterey, Grossman is the only person who appears unperturbed amid the commotion swirling around Janis and Big Brother. His presence is imposing, in part because of his physical appearance, in part because of his manner. He is portly without being fat. He remains still for long periods of time, but when he moves he moves briskly, in the manner of a slender man. His hair turned gray before he was forty. Half a generation older than most of his clients, his aura can seem parental. When he wants to be overbearing, it’s as though your stern grandfather has taken umbrage. John L. Wasserman, film critic for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, said in his review of *Dont Look Back* that Grossman looked like a Soviet diplomat. Two years later, Grossman has let his hair grow longer. He wears round steel-rimmed glasses. They make him look wide-eyed, which is one of his favorite expressions. Who, me? He resembles no one so much as the man on the Quaker Oats carton.

Ron Polte, manager of Quicksilver Messenger Service, knows Grossman from Chicago. At Monterey, he has introduced Grossman to Big Brother. On Saturday afternoon, Janis approaches Grossman and asks him to consult with the band about Pennebaker’s movie.

By now, John Phillips and Lou Adler have made Big Brother a tempting offer: If you’ll agree to be filmed, we’ll put you on again, on Sunday evening.

Pennebaker has spoken with Albert about Janis’s performance, which blew him away. “Whatever you have to do,” Penny said to him, “I don’t care if you have to go in and break a leg. God, we have to film her! We just have to do it. This is the basis of the whole film.”

“Don’t worry,” Albert said. “I’ll fix it for you.” And he does.

When Big Brother asks Albert if they should accept the offer to perform again, if they'll agree to be filmed, he says, Hey, I'd do it. He doesn't say this just because Penny asked for his help. Albert has no stake in the movie, no investment yet, either financial or emotional, in Big Brother's career. He tells them to go for it because he knows it's the right thing for them to do. If you want wider recognition, he says, this is the way to get it.

Albert's approval is all the holdouts in Big Brother need. They consent to be filmed. Janis is elated, and Julius Karpen storms off in a huff. Adler and Phillips juggle the schedule and make room for Big Brother on the Sunday evening program.

While this drama plays out in the background, we of the Pennebaker crew are focused on the performances at hand. On Saturday evening, Otis Redding is the highlight, but the Airplane, the Byrds, Hugh Masakela, and Booker T. and the MGs also work their magic.

On Sunday morning, Chief Marinello sends home half the officers he has mustered to police the festival.

Ravi Shankar is the sole performer on Sunday afternoon. In this gathering where the other performers are mining mother lode veins of rock and roll, R&B, folk, and jazz, the crowd—a scattering of blues and jazz and folk fans among the dominant mass of beatniks and hippies and flower children—accords Shankar the status of guru-for-the-day.

For this performance, I take control of the button that will turn on the red light and signal the cameras to roll. Our tripod cameras have twelve-hundred-foot magazines that run for half an hour without reloading, but the others—the free-roaming cameras on our catwalks alongside the stage—have four-hundred-foot rolls that last just ten minutes. Penny has decided to film Ravi's final raga, which will surely run longer than that. My job is to guess when the tune is within ten minutes of its end, so the shoulder-held cameras can shoot without interruption until it's over.

My qualifications for undertaking this responsibility are late nights in Cambridge that ended up stoned to the gills and zoning out to the recordings of this very same wizard of the sitar, or to Ali Akbar Khan, equally adept master of the sitar's first cousin, the sarod, in the company of my roommate Fritz Richmond, washtub bassist for the Charles River Valley Boys and the Jim Kweskin Jug Band—whose mastery of the washtub approaches Ravi's on the sitar, relatively speaking—and our frequent guest, Bob Neuwirth.

At Monterey, I stroll the arena during Shankar's early pieces, absorbing the music on the move. Ravi feels connected to the audience. He introduces each piece at greater length than is his custom before a Western audience. The crowd is with him all the way. In the front rows of seats reserved for performers, a cluster of musicians—Mike Bloomfield, Jimi Hendrix, Al Wilson of Canned Heat, Michelle Phillips—listen raptly.

Today the coastal clouds have hung around, and colors glow more brightly in the diffuse light. A plan to have bagsful of the festival's signature pink orchids tossed from a hot-air balloon above the arena has gone awry because of the fog bank, so instead the ushers have placed an orchid on every seat before

the concert begins. During Ravi's set, the flowers, threaded through buttonholes, tucked behind ears, held in hands, or woven into long hair, glow like radiant, oversized fireflies that have alighted throughout the audience.

As the final raga begins, I return to the catwalk at the edge of the stage, all my attention on Ravi and his accompanists. I shoot some photos. . . . I wait . . . and wait, through the languid, hypnotic exposition of the opening themes. Almost imperceptibly, the tempo of the music increases, the rhythms of the tabla—the small hand drums played incomparably by Alla Rakha—gaining speed, Ravi effortlessly keeping pace. The tempo becomes insistent . . . and still I wait . . . until I dare not wait any longer. I switch on the red light and the cameras roll, ten minutes of film spooling off at twenty-four frames a second.

The interplay between the sitar and the tabla grows steadily more complex as Ravi initiates the phase where the sitar calls to the tabla and the drums answer—short phrases, simple at first, then more complex, drawing smiles of delight from Alla Rakha, answering smiles from Shankar and from Kamala Chakravarty, who fills out the sound with the mesmeric monotone of the tamboura. Toward the end, the tabla and sitar join together, the players' hands flying over the strings and drumheads in a blur, impossibly fast, until the elation that this music from halfway around the world brings to this arena, this audience, approaches rapture.

The ending brings the crowd to its feet as one with a joyous roar that must be audible in downtown Monterey.

The audience pelts the stage with flowers. Pink orchids pile up at the feet of the musicians. They bow time and again, palms together, beatific, deeply moved by the response. The trio leaves the stage. They are called back. The waves of applause wash the arena. The ovation promises to go on until it's time for the evening concert. In the film, the applause will continue for almost two minutes, which seems like a very long time. Now, in real life, it lasts much longer.

Finally Shankar holds up his arms and the audience quiets. "I want you to know how much I love you all and how happy I am to be loved by you," he says. He picks up a handful of orchids, throws them back into the crowd, bows for the last time, and the grateful people let him go.

It is a singular triumph among many on a triumphant weekend.

I cherish one image, a mental film clip, from Sunday afternoon after Ravi's transcendent set. Strolling the fairgrounds, I see a Monterey motorcycle cop cruising along a roadway, greeted everywhere with smiles and smiling nonstop himself, the whip antenna on the back of the bike waving brightly, pinkly, adorned from bottom to top with skewered orchids.

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SUNDAY EVENING IS Big Brother's chance to prove they can repeat their Saturday sensation. For this performance, Janis decks herself out in a gold lamé pantsuit and she sings as if her future depends on it, which it does. This time around, many in the audience know what to expect, but "Ball and Chain" knocks

them out all over again and once more they roar their admiration. As Janis leaves the stage, she raises her arms and skips with joy. She knows she nailed it for the cameras.

“The best time of all was Monterey. It was one of the highest points of my life. Those were real flower children. They really were beautiful and gentle and completely open, man. Ain’t nothing like that ever gonna happen again.”

Janis Joplin